

BMHA Newsletter

BICYCLE MOBILE HAMS OF AMERICA



Volume 13, Number 3

July-December 2002

2002 BMHA Forum... Another Great Turnout!

This years forum was one of the largest ever. We filled the room, ran out of time, and had the most interesting variety of programs ever. I didn't get an exact count, but know it was 100+ interested people.

As many of you know, BMHA shares a common interest with the HFpack group. Both groups have an interest in QRP, innovative antennas and methods to mount equipment either on our bikes or manpacks. We were asked by two members of their group to say a few words and their opening kicked off our one and a half hours of discussion. Budd, W3FF, inventor of the Buddipole antenna, introduced us to the HFpack group and Bonnie, KQ6XA gave us additional detail about HFpack and the invitation to join them on HF with our bicycle mobiles anytime, anyplace, anywhere. An interesting invitation that I have witnessed and participated in on 18.157.5 several times.

Jim, NC8Y, the organizer of all the Dayton BMHA rides, talked about the 2002 ride and then showed many slides he has taken over the years of all the BMHA rides. He had some very interesting stories and some of his slides were of Hartley, our founder on the BMHA rides. I even noticed myself in a few of the pictures. Jim's efforts for the annual BMHA rides are very much appreciated by all. He does a great job of making it a great ride each year.

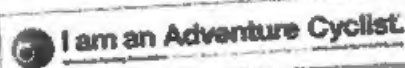
Russ, KB8U, always has a great story to tell. This year he talked about some of the most interesting contacts while he was on the air and some humorous happenings. Russ also talked about some of his cycling projects and rides he has taken.

The right column shows a couple of the pictures I was able to shoot this year.

Another great forum and I look forward to hosting it once again next year. I fully expect the Hamvention to invite us once again.

Mike Nickolaus, NF0N, Forum Moderator
email: nf0n@arrl.net

The Dayton Hamvention website is located at:
<http://www.hamvention.org/>. -Ed.



Russ, KB8U



Jim, NC8Y

1st Annual BMHA Rally

The first annual BMHA Rally was held at the Midwest/Dakota ARRL Convention on June 15, 2002. Two BMHA members, Mike, NF0N and Anthony, N0RJK had a highly visible display of their recumbent bikes completely outfitted with their HF mobile stations. Several hundred Ham's visited the display and were awed at the great display. Many pictures were taken, several HF contacts were made on the ride to the park and the room completely filled at the BMHA forum.

Yes, the ride to the part was a short one (4 blocks round trip) but it was the symbolic gesture and the fact that you can actually run HF on a bicycle while in motion.

There was a rather interesting impromptu moment at the BMHA forum. Unknown to us, Warren, W0WLR brought with him a radio he used bicycle mobile in 1939. He had a great story to tell about how he mounted this radio on his bicycle and the antenna he used. I would be willing to say that he holds the record for the earliest bicycle mobile.

Several pictures of the bicycle display and Warren's radio are attached. (pictures of the bicycles are on the back cover of the Newsletter... ed.)

We'll do it again next year but if anyone want's to host a BMHA rally at their local or regional convention, as they say "Just do it!!"

Mike, NF0N

Warren's Radio from 1939...



BMHA NEWSLETTER

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BMHA NEWSLETTER is a triannual publication of the Bicycle Mobile Hams of America - Mar, Jul, and Nov. Permission is given to reproduce any of the material in this issue, provided the author is credited and the source is acknowledged as "from the Newsletter of the Bicycle Mobile Hams of America." Please send a clip to the address below. We welcome articles, suggestions, letters, announcements, photos, artwork - anything pertaining to the combining of bicycling with amateur radio.

The BMHA is affiliated with Adventure Cycling Association, the League of American Bicyclists, and Worldradio.

BICYCLE MOBILE HAMS OF AMERICA (BMHA)

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ABOUT BMHA

For the information of our first-time readers

Bicycle Mobile Hams of America got its start when a 'Stray' in the June '89 QST magazine asked to "get in touch with hams who operate their radios while bicycle-mobile," signed by Hartley Alley, NA0A. Twenty-five hams responded, filled out questionnaires, and received a summary of the collected data.

In April of '90 we had our first BMHA Forum at the Dayton HamVention. We played to a packed house, overflowed the room, and added 54 names to our mailing list. Our eight subsequent forums have drawn increasingly larger audiences, and now BMHA is firmly established as a 'regular' at this world-renowned event.

This is the forty-fifth issue of our triannual newsletter, which has become the clearinghouse for the exchange of info and ideas for the hams who go on the air from their bicycles.

BMHA membership puts you in touch with a friendly and helpful group of bike-riding hams. You'll make contacts through our membership directory, E-mail address list, E-mail discussion group, the annual meeting and Forum at the Dayton HamVention and other regional meetings, and of course through the BMHA Newsletter, which has articles on bike trips, antennas, other gear, operating tips, etc. A membership application is on the next -to-last page.

FEATURE STORY

Conversational CW

by Scott Laughlin

After reading Frank's encounter with bicycle/mobile hamming on the last page of BMHA Newsletter, Jan/Feb/Mar 2002 my mind went careening back in time to when I was a Tech.

My shack was a small travel trailer with the dining table removed, making room for my rig. Every night I tuned up an aging, rockbound Heathkit DX-20 and begin CQing on 40-meters. On 24 Apr 1990 at 0627z Wes, K6OZK/mobile 6 answered my call. Wes was en route from Hollywood to Lancaster driving a 1972 Vega with 350,000 miles showing on the odometer. This chance meeting became the first of a host of QSOs, a dozen, maybe two dozen. I'm not certain.

We discussed a verity of subjects—work, cars, radio, fishing and he always responded with appropriate answers to my questions. Then one night it occurred to me that Wes was not able to make notes. On his thigh where he might have placed a "fighter pilot" note pad was a telegraph key. Wes was retaining my questions in his head.

As rude it as it may sound, I began asking more complicated questions, queries requiring a more involved response than a simple yes or no, subjects off the normal, "my rig is...", or "my ant is...", and he always responded with valid answers. Well, this conversational CW can't be so hard, I muttered to myself. And I confidently reached for the light switch.

Plunging my shack into darkness plunged my mental state into total chaos and chaos soon became disaster. I could do little more than send my own call in the dark. Wes could have been sending plain text Russian for all I knew. My ability to comprehend Morse was suddenly beyond my capabilities. In the space of three-nanoseconds I had become illiterate.

I have no clue how long I searched for the wall switch. It really didn't matter because I was finished for the night. I'm not even certain I signed with Wes.

Wes and I QSOed after that, but I always kept the lights on, marveling at his ability to do so many things at the same time and do them all so well. This brief encounter rooted my interest in conversational CW. But I had learned to copy code with a pencil and now it held me prisoner. Could I ever break free?

I took my question to a friend who had recently earned his Extra Class (then requiring 20 wpm) and asked how he learned to copy so fast. His answer was simple.

Evenings, after work, he started a computer program generating code at 25 wpm, turned it down to where he could hardly hear it, then ignoring it he read a magazine. After awhile he found himself recognizing a character here and another there. And as time passed he caught phrases. It was like being in a quiet restaurant and overhearing bits of a private conversation. In time he was ready for the test.

I understand Frank's conclusion. Cycling is fun and so is CW. But putting them together is more difficult than it first seems. However, for some, sneaking up from the side might be easier than meeting it head on.

EDITOR'S NOTEPAD

One Hectic Schedule...

Due to my busy schedule, I was unable to produce a Newsletter during the summer as expected. Therefore, this issue looks to be the last of the year. So let me take this opportunity to wish everyone a Happy Holiday Season. Since the Coast Guard is providing me with a few uncertainties next year, I'm uncertain of my Holiday plans. But I'm sure I'll make the best of things.

Being assigned to a Coast Guard Cutter has been a busy experience. We're currently preparing for a six week training period called Tailored Ship's Training Availability (TSTA, pronounced, "Tista"). TSTA is a training period where the crew is trained in all facets of defending the ship against combat assaults, fire, flooding, and other damage. There's an amazing administrative burden associated with this training. Like most ships entering TSTA, we were behind. So there's been a lot of catching up to do. As if all the admin wasn't enough to keep me busy, I've had plenty of troubleshooting to keep me busy as well. The ship was struck by lightning about a month ago. This let the smoke out of a lot of equipment around the ship. Each time we fix one component, another fault is revealed. I'm confident we'll be ready before leave for training on November 2nd. But I'm still exhausted from the constant chasing of little gremlins.

I've been selected for promotion to Chief Petty Officer (E-7). This means I'll be transferred. Whether I'll transfer down the pier to another ship or across the country to a shore based assignment is yet to be seen. Due to my currently hectic schedule and my upcoming transition to another assignment, I will plan to produce only three Newsletters in 2003. In case you're wondering what the difference between 2002 and 2003 is... not producing four issues in 2002 was unplanned while three issues in 2003 is planned. If I'm not assigned to another ship, I'll resume a quarterly format in 2004.

I'm still rather on the inactive side of my 2-meter radio. But the cycling is going well. I'm still riding with the blind athletes. In fact, I'm doing a 20-30 miler with a new rider very soon.

Well, I guess that enough information for now. I look forward to some of the new things that appear to be developing in BMHA.

73,

Scott A. Farrell, KE4WMF
BMHA Newsletter Editor
BMHA Discussion List Moderator
<http://www.StealthTDI.com/HamRadio.html>

WEBMASTER'S CORNER

I'd like to say that it has been an uneventful summer here in the San Francisco Bay area, but it has been anything but. For those of you in high technology, you've undoubtedly read about the merger of Hewlett-Packard and Compaq Computer Company. I'm right in the middle of this, so not much time for Webmastering.

By the time you read this, I hope to have cleaned up some of the older links on the site. We are always looking for good content (even a link to your own home page in our Member Websites directory). Mail me at BMHA-Webmaster@LaFetra.com and I'll make it happen.

Another good Web resource isn't directly on the BMHA site at all -- there is an active BMHA discussion forum at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/BMHA/>. Please join in. This forum is brought to you and moderated by Scott, KE4WMF (who also edits this newsletter).

The big news on the Website is that we have now conducted two online surveys. In the last issue I summarized the first survey. A bit farther along in this article I will summarize the second survey.

But before giving the summary, I'd like to remind you that the responses are available online and in "real time" at <http://www.LaFetra.com/BMHA/Survey/>. You can look at the results from either survey -- and you can even take the first survey if you haven't done so already.

We've had pretty good turnout for each survey -- about 30 people each time. And we're getting some good ideas from the "comments" section.

Another good source of comments is from the e-mail which I receive. Although I'm not the only club officer -- and certainly not the most active -- I do get a lot of e-mail from current and prospective members. I think a lot of people send to "webmaster" when they want information!

One common question is "I sent my membership information in two months ago and haven't heard anything yet -- don't you want new members?" The truth is (of course) that we want and need new members -- especially ones who can write articles, host a net, be a club officer, and otherwise help the club thrive and grow. But we are a volunteer organization (this means that work and family obligations take first priority), and several of us have jobs which limit what we can do to intermittent periods of activity. Your membership application goes to several places -- first to the Treasurer for the "good stuff" and eventually to me to update the online roster. This takes time, but we all work very hard to make sure that new members are taken through the entire "pipeline" before printing and mailing the next issue of the newsletter.

And now, I'll give some highlights of the last online survey. Look for the next survey to hit the Website about the same time that you receive this issue.

- * The responders were overwhelmingly male (32:1)
- * 30-50 years or older was the average age bracket (6 under 30, 13 in the bracket, 14 over 50)

- * 1/3 bike to work/school at least occasionally (4 always, 3 often, 10 seldom, 14 never)

- * Your home rigs cover most of the bands and you use them (see the survey details on the website for the full "scoop")

- * At least one of you works 1.2GHz and above on the bike. The rest of the bands are more frequently used when bike-mobile, with VHF/UHF being most popular. Somehow, this doesn't surprise me!

- * You are almost evenly split (20 to 14) whether you prefer a road bicycle or a mountain bike.

- * Another even split is whether you antenna is mounted on the bike (19) or directly on the radio (14). Some of you (7) mount the antenna on yourself.

- * Twice as many (24) of you power your radio with the HT's battery pack than use external batteries (13), but a significant number (8) use another power source such as solar.

- * Headsets and earpiece-mikes (19) barely beat out handheld microphones (16), with a minority (5) using the HT's built-in microphone.

That's enough demographics. We also asked a few questions about what the club should be doing:

- * There is overwhelming support (13 to 4, with 16 don't-care) for reviving the HF net. This is a major undertaking, but one that you would like to see. Look to an upcoming issue of the newsletter for more information and discussion.

- * There is good but less support (10 to 12, with 11 don't care) for accepting electronic payment (such as PayPal or another provider) for memberships. Again, this is something that we'll look into and report back in a future newsletter.

Finally, some of the comments we received are below (again, please look at the survey summary on the web for full details):

- * "I mostly use my 2m FM with a hat antenna."
- * "One idea is to use a link to a remote HF available only to members and then on the bike while riding. One could actually be on HF but using a VHF handheld."
- * I would like to see the BMHA do ... "RAGBRAI" (the Great Annual Bicycle Ride Across Iowa)
- * "My home station is solar powered."
- * "I'd like to see articles on mounting radios and antennas." (this was a frequent comment)
- * "I only do 20-meter CW on my bike."
- * "Let's (re)start the club net. Either that, or have members check into the HFPACK nets."
- * "I enjoy reading the newsletter and what everyone is doing while bicycle mobile!"
- * "I plan to get a recumbent and mount a screwdriver-type antenna on it."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 5...

* "I think you need to put basic information on our website such as how to mount the average HT (a plastic water bottle cage will work). How would you mount a small mobile unit, vibration resistance of radios, lightweight power sources, etc."

* "It would be nice to have a meeting or calling frequency to meet other bicycle hams. I mostly read about them and very seldom hear any on HF. A couple of locals on 2 meters is all."

Until next time, keep pedaling.

Skip AA6WK
BMHA Webmaster@LaFetra.com

Back Issues Still Available.

You may purchase any of the 44 back issues of the BMHA Newsletter for \$1.50 each, postpaid. Order the entire set for \$30. For info on the contents of the various issues send a business-size SASE to: BMHA, 316 East 32nd Street, South Sioux City, NE 68776-3512, and ask for the Index of Back Issues. This service available to members only.

Membership Renewal Request

The time has come again to request members to renew their memberships. Please take the time to look at the mailing label on this Newsletter. You will see the status of your membership. If you label says, "OVERDUE," this may be your last Newsletter. Please use the "Membership Application" at the bottom of this page.

YahooGroups! Discussion List News From KE4WMF

BMHA's Discussion List is 200 members strong and continuing to exchange information. We discuss everything

from preferred setups to the latest news. Speaking of the latest news, here's news that has commanded some discussion in the BMHA Discussion Forum (edited for brevity):

BikeE Ungracefully Bows Out Of Business

AUGUST 29, 2002 - CORVALLIS, OR (BRAIN)-- Recumbent leader BikeE closed its doors and went out of business Aug. 23, the company told Bicycle Retailer & Industry News yesterday. The move shocked few retailers, who had been unable to contact BikeE since mid-August, when the company disconnected its toll-free telephone number and took its web site offline.

The company, the country's largest recumbent maker, sold approximately 10,000 bikes last year. One person close to the company estimated it had sales of \$6 million last year.

BikeE turned over the collection of accounts receivables and liquidation of its remaining inventory to agents of its secured creditors, which Brown declined to name. Brown said questions regarding receivables should be directed to (541) 738-4327, an independent agency. Questions regarding inventory can be directed to Brown at (541) 738-4390.

The move also pulled the warranty rug out from under retailers who sold the company's products. An estimated 30,000 bikes were sold in BikeE's 10-year existence.

"It really compromises the relationship between retailers and their customers," said Dirk Reitsma, owner of D.J.'s Cycles, a BikeE dealer at in Belmar, New Jersey.

Not the greatest of news; but still very good to know that important info that affects us can be found in the BMHA discussion forum. Come on and join the fun at: <http://www.yahooogroups.com/BMHA>.

Scott A. Farrell, KE4WMF

Membership Application

BICYCLE MOBILE HAMS OF AMERICA

Date _____

C/O Mike Nickolaus, NF0N

316 E. 32nd St.

South Sioux City, NE 68776-3512

Individual \$10 _____	New member? _____	Renewal? _____
(US or Canada)		
Family \$15 _____	Foreign \$15 _____	Donation \$ _____

Make check payable to BMHA, in US dollars or international money order.

Name _____ Call _____

Address _____ License Class _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

E-mail address _____

Age _____ Most miles bicycled in one day _____

Please check your preferred format (please check only one)

Paper copy via USPS _____ Electronic Copy via E-mail _____

BMHA's Official Logo

The next time you need to order new QSL cards, don't forget to include the BMHA logo in your design. Here's the official logo, designed by Russ Dwarshuis, KB8U; and restored by Scott A. Farrell, KE4WMF.



BMHA NEWSLETTER

Bicycle Mobile Hams of America
C/o Mike Nickolaus, NF0N
316 E. 32nd St.
South Sioux City, NE 68776-3512

First Class Mail

PHOTOS...



ABOVE: Anthony, N0RJK describes his bicycle mobile station.

LEFT: Mike, NF0N poses with his ride...